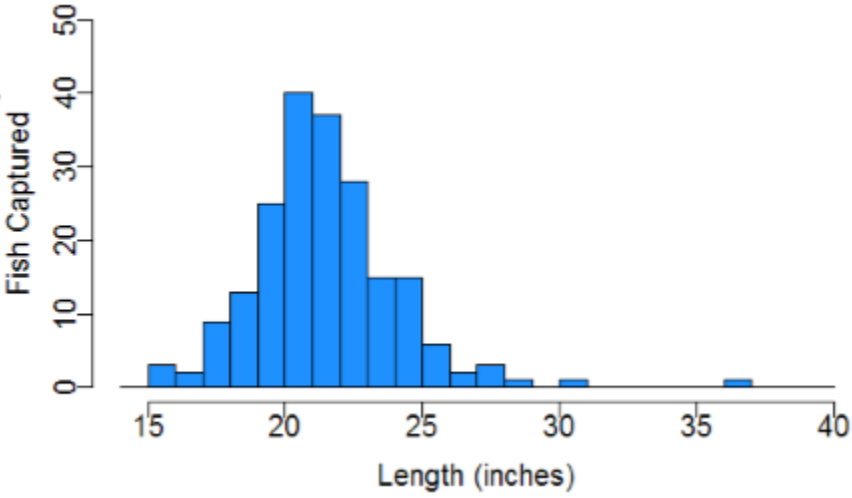
Spring Fisheries Survey Summary
Spring Lake, Sawyer County, 2019

The Hayward DNR Fisheries Management Team conducted a fyke netting survey on Spring Lake on April 23, 2019 to assess the northern pike, yellow perch and black crappie populations in the lake. Six nets were set overnight for one night which resulted in six total net-nights of effort. An electrofishing survey conducted on May 29, 2019 documented the status of bluegill, largemouth bass, and non-game species. The entire shoreline of the lake was shocked, but panfish were only collected for a subset of the shoreline. Quality, preferred, and memorable sizes referenced in this summary are based on standard proportions of world record lengths developed for each species by the American Fisheries Society.

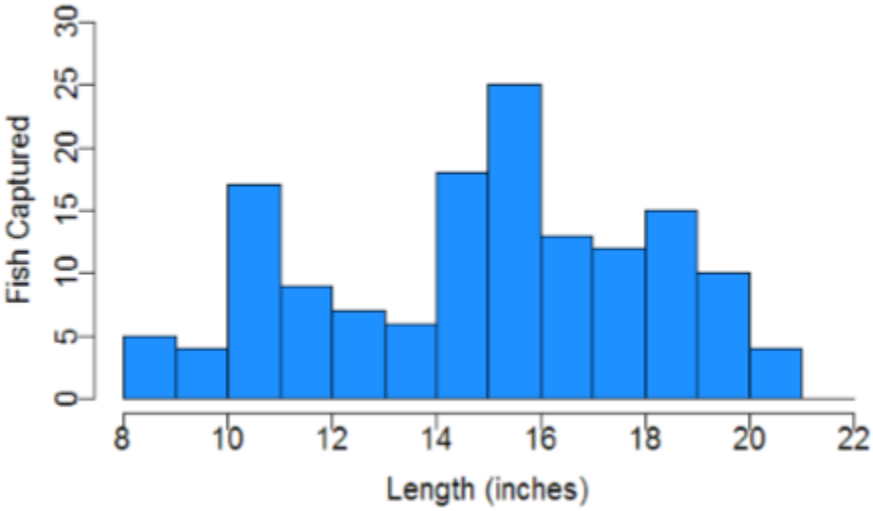
Northern Pike

Captured 21 per net-night ≥ 14 inches	
Quality Size ≥ 21"	54%
Preferred Size ≥ 28"	1%



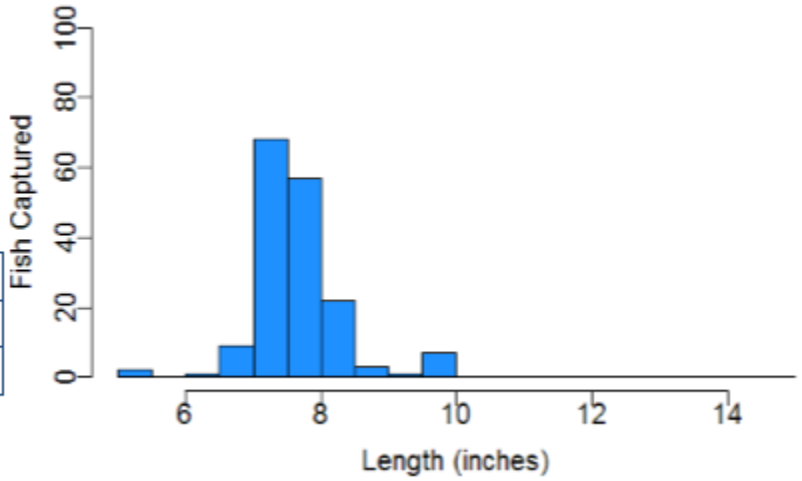
Largemouth bass

Captured 45 per mile ≥ 8 inches	
Quality Size ≥ 12"	76%
Preferred Size ≥ 15"	54%



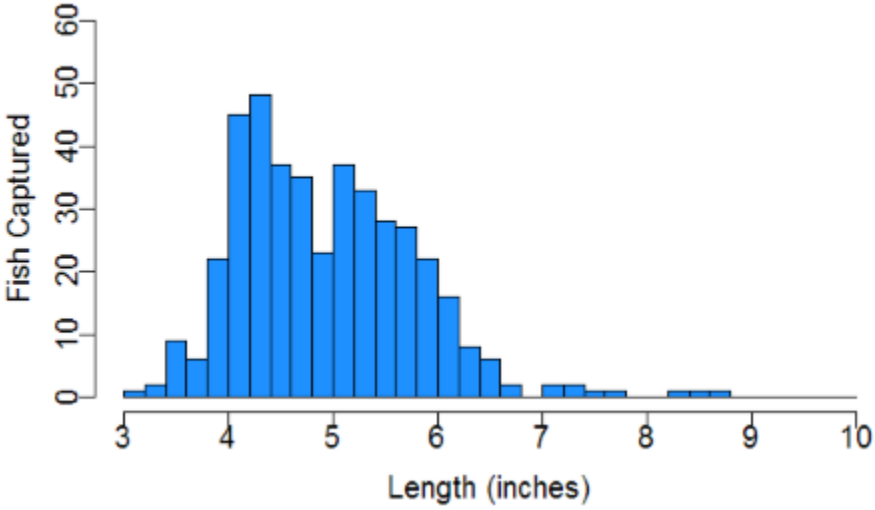
Black Crappie

Captured 145 per net-night ≥ 5 inches	
Quality Size ≥ 8”	19%
Preferred Size ≥ 10”	0%



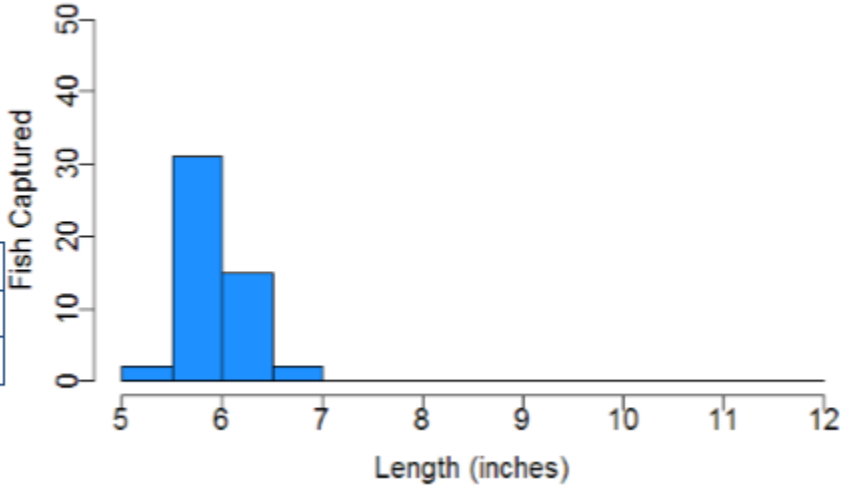
Bluegill

Captured 416 per mile ≥ 3 inches	
Quality Size ≥ 6”	10%
Preferred Size ≥ 8”	1%



Yellow Perch

Captured 139 per net-night ≥ 5 inches	
Quality Size ≥ 8”	0%
Preferred Size ≥ 10”	0%



Summary of Results

The netting portion of this survey appeared to be very well timed to capture pike and certain panfish species. Catch rates for crappie and perch were exceptionally high. With large sample sizes for all species included in this report, we feel confident that we have a good representation of sizes of fish in the lake, even if catch rates may be somewhat inflated.

Spring Lake does not have established populations of walleye or muskellunge, leaving northern pike as the top predator in the system. This survey showed a large percentage (54%) of pike being “quality size”, or 21 inches, but few achieved 28 inches. Relative abundance of pike was fairly high, and that abundance may be limiting growth and top end size potential to some extent. Abundance in 2019 was higher than in the last survey (2012), but size metrics were largely similar between the two surveys.

The largemouth bass population in Spring Lake continues to be exceptional. Over half of all largemouth surveyed in 2019 were over 15 inches. Largemouth size and abundance in 2019 were similar to the results of the 2012 survey, indicating that the high quality of this fishery was not a flash in the pan. This survey will hopefully reassure local anglers who were concerned that winterkill in 2017-18 and 2018-19 might have significantly decreased bass abundance or overall bass fishing quality. This population continues to be very special.

Abundance of all three major panfish species were high, which leads to generally poor size structure. Catch rates for both crappie and perch in the fyke netting portion of the survey were very high. Few quality-size individuals were observed for either species, with perch size being particularly poor. Bluegill abundance from the electrofishing portion of the survey was also high, and still may underestimate their abundance. There were several times during the survey when there were so many bluegill in the area of the shocking boat they could not all be collected. It appears that the two main predators in Spring Lake (largemouth bass and northern pike) cannot effectively control panfish abundance in this lake. It will be difficult to improve size of panfish if such densities continue to persist. Interestingly enough, size of panfish has been better during periods of time when Spring Lake would periodically experience some amount of winterkill.

Fisheries Technician Evan Sniadajewski holding a nice Spring Lake largemouth. Largemouth were a real highlight of the 2019 Spring Lake survey. Photo by Max Wolter.

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